



## UNIDOSUS: OUR CURRENT WORK ON IMMIGRATION

October 2023

This document provides background on UnidosUS's efforts on immigration and a summary of current priorities on this issue. It has been prepared for the 2023 Fall Affiliate Convening.

### INTRODUCTION

For more than five decades, UnidosUS has been committed to improving the lives of our country's immigrant community, with a priority on pursuing multiple avenues to create a path to citizenship for undocumented Latinos. The legalization of undocumented immigrants is an important goal—studies show that it would increase GDP by \$230 billion and income for all Americans by \$124 billion; create 288,000 net new jobs; and provide \$41 billion in new revenue to the Social Security system. Immigration policies also affect many other intergenerational challenges facing Latino families, including improving access to economic opportunities, addressing nutrition and health gaps in the community, and stabilizing the environments that allow children to thrive in school.

The impact of immigration and immigration-related policies goes well beyond the undocumented. Although one-third of Hispanics are foreign-born, about half live in households with one or more immigrant(s). Many of the those in immigrant households—including US citizens and others lawfully present—face legal, social, and economic barriers on top of those experienced by the Hispanic community overall.

UnidosUS continues to address these challenges and has played a leadership role in every immigration reform policy campaign dating back to the 1980s. Our sustained focus on immigration reform is not only a bet on the intergenerational betterment of the Latino community over time, but also serves as a means by which to strengthen the nation's long-term vitality, competitiveness, and health.

### OUR CURRENT IMMIGRATION PORTFOLIO

UnidosUS's current portfolio on immigration consists of these key buckets of work:

- 1) Meaningful immigration relief for the long-term undocumented and their families.
- 2) Fostering immigrant integration, including by expanding access to legal services.
- 3) Accelerating immigrant inclusion by reducing barriers to critical programs, services, and the nation's safety net.
- 4) Advocating for effective, humane solutions to our southern border challenges.

A high-level but not exhaustive overview of each area of work, with a few examples of that work, is shared below.

- 1) Meaningful immigration relief for the long-term undocumented and their families** is possible via both legislative and executive action. UnidosUS engages the Congress, the White House, and key federal agencies and states to pursue bipartisan legislative solutions and executive actions at the federal and state levels. We also fight to protect the undocumented and their families from

harmful and anti-immigrant policies and actions until our advocacy efforts to secure relief are successful. Specifically, we:

- Educate lawmakers and the public about the harms of policy initiatives that are enforcement-only, anti-immigrant, and/or aim to crack down on immigrants.
  - [UnidosUS release](#) denouncing action in the House of Representatives on the so-called Secure the Border Act (HR2).
  - UnidosUS blasted [a key vote alert](#) to Congress urging Members to vote NO on a bill that would interfere with local decisions about providing temporary shelter to legitimate asylum seekers as they seek work and the ability to support themselves.
  - [UnidosUS statement](#) in response to the Florida legislature's passage of SB 1718, legislation that would target immigrants and their families and criminalize Floridians who provide them with support.
  - [UnidosUS report](#), *Still at Risk: The Urgent Need to Address Immigration Enforcement's Harms to Children*, presents key data on immigration enforcement and its impact on our nation's children, and proposes action steps for the federal government as well as state and local policymakers.
  - UnidosUS [letter](#) from President and CEO, Janet Murguía, urging House and Senate leadership to take concrete steps to protect unaccompanied migrant children from labor exploitation and support these youth and their needs.
- Advocate for bipartisan legislation to protect DREAMers, prospective Temporary Protected Status (TPS) recipients, and undocumented farmworkers. Irrespective of the many challenges, including entrenched congressional gridlock and division on the immigration issue, we monitor conditions and opportunities for targeted legislative action.
  - UnidosUS [reaction](#) to the introduction of the bipartisan "Dignity Act" applauding the leadership of two Latinas in Congress who are working together to find solutions that modernize our immigration system.
  - UnidosUS [testimony](#) submitted to the U.S. Senate Subcommittee on Immigration on hearing titled "Removing Barriers to Legal Migration to Strengthen our Communities and Economy."
  - Coalition [letter](#) from UnidosUS and civil rights groups on the urgent need for a path to citizenship for the undocumented.
  - UnidosUS [testimony](#) submitted to the U.S. Senate Committee on the Judiciary on hearing titled "H.R.6, American Dream and Promise Act of 2021" asserts that a pathway to citizenship for all DREAMers and TPS holders is an integral part of a comprehensive pandemic recovery plan.
- Press for administrative policies that protect long-term undocumented immigrants including DREAMers and TPS holders with deep family and economic roots in the United States, including:
  - The expanded use of parole authority under our immigration laws to "parole-in-place" certain classes of undocumented immigrants who contribute to the public good, such as working in critical jobs as essential workers and closing other gaps in our workforce.
  - Expanding access to cancellation of removal, which potentially offers eligible undocumented immigrants who have lived in the U.S. for 10 years or more a green

card and eventual citizenship if their removal would cause extreme hardship to a close family member.

- Renewal of TPS and other temporary protections (e.g., El Salvador, Honduras, Venezuela, and Cuba) and expansion of TPS to protect more individuals from covered countries (e.g., Guatemala and Colombia).
- Related to the above:
  - UnidosUS led a sign-on [letter](#) of national Latino organizations calling on the Biden administration to provide much-needed relief, fairness, and stability to immigrant families through executive action.
  - UnidosUS contributed to and [endorsed](#) the publication: *2023 Immigration Priorities: A Blueprint for the Biden-Harris Administration*.
  - The UnidosUS Action Fund, with the Immigration HUB and Somos Votantes, [released a poll](#) showing that an overwhelming majority of Latino voters favor President Biden taking swift action to provide legal pathways for undocumented immigrants, including Dreamers and other long-term residents.
  - Signed onto multiple letters of support (one [example here](#)) for renewal and redesignation of TPS.
  - UnidosUS [release](#) applauding the administration's extension of TPS for certain Central Americans and Nepalese while calling on the President to re-designate TPS for those countries to expand TPS eligibility and to designate TPS for nationals from Guatemala.
  - UnidosUS [release](#) applauding the administration's extension of TPS to nearly half a million Venezuelans.

**2) Fostering immigrant integration, including by expanding access to legal services**, so that immigrants have access to immigration benefits for which they qualify, including temporary protections, DACA, work permits, permanent status, asylum, and citizenship. We work to increase the number of low-cost, high-quality immigration legal service providers within and outside the Affiliate network, catalyzing service delivery innovations, and increasing the funding/resources available for this work.

- UnidosUS published a [blog](#), *Behind Dire Headlines, There Is Some Good News on the Immigration Front*, to raise awareness about the work that community-based organizations like our Affiliates are doing to provide critical information so immigrants can learn about potential options to stay in the United States and the complex legal road required to pursue them.
- UnidosUS published [a fact sheet](#) on the need for immigration legal services and the work of UnidosUS Affiliates in providing immigration legal services.
- UnidosUS [advocates](#) the use of American Rescue Plan funding for immigration legal services.
- UnidosUS engages congressional offices on the need for federal funding to expand legal services capacity in the field as reflected in this [leave-behind document](#). We also advocate for federal investments into immigrant integration in our yearly DHS and DOJ [appropriations](#) requests of Congress.
- UnidosUS submitted [comments](#) in opposition to the proposed increases in USCIS application fees, particularly those that impede naturalization and family-based immigration. We recommended that USCIS expand fee waiver eligibility for low-income and vulnerable immigrants, modernize its funding structure, and find alternative ways to finance its processing without relying on fees.

**3) Accelerating immigrant inclusion by reducing barriers to critical programs, services, and the nation's safety net.** Immigrants, whether undocumented, newly arrived, or long-term residents, and their families continue to face significant barriers to accessing critical public services, including education, health, housing, and anti-poverty programs. This exclusion is further exacerbated by the threat of immigration enforcement, language access gaps, and the ongoing fear that immigrants have that using public benefits will adversely impact their eligibility for immigration benefits.

- UnidosUS's has long supported immigrants' access to [poverty-reducing tax policies](#). We fought hard to ensure mixed status families were eligible for the economic impact payments included in COVID relief, continue to fight for the restoration of eligibility for immigrant children for the , and launched an impactful nationwide [campaign](#) with our Affiliate Network, the administration, and others to ensure Latino families [took advantage](#) of the CTC expansions in in the American Rescue Plan in 2021.
- UnidosUS has long [advocated](#) for health coverage for all people in the U.S., regardless of immigration status. With so many others, we [celebrated](#) and keep our community informed when the administration [announced](#) that DACA recipients would be able to secure health coverage by accessing Medicaid and the Affordable Care Act health exchanges.
- UnidosUS has long advocated for the removal of barriers faced by immigrants to access government and education services and our nation's safety net. This includes barriers to [nutrition programs](#), a [quality education](#), and actual and perceived barriers related to the issue of becoming a "[public charge](#)" in the immigration context.

**4) Advocating for effective, humane solutions to our southern border challenges** that foster legal immigration so migrants come with visas, not smugglers, hemispheric collaboration, border integrity and management, and protecting access to asylum. How well the U.S. adapts and responds to migrant streams arriving on our southern border impacts not only the immigrants who arrive seeking safety, to join family, and/or to work, but have clear implications for our receiving communities across America. As long as concerns about the chaos on the border continue to grow, anti-immigrant lawmakers will continue to exploit the challenges for political gain while obstructing humane and practical solutions that legalize the long-term undocumented, strengthen families of mixed immigration status, and effectively strengthen our southern border.

- UnidosUS submitted [a comment](#) to the Biden administration's proposed rulemaking on asylum, expressing (1) opposition to limiting access to asylum and (2) support for incentives for humanitarian migrants that provide viable alternatives to having to make the dangerous journey to our southern border to seek safety.
- UnidosUS published an [op ed](#) arguing for humane immigration and border policies at the end of Title 42.
- UnidosUS [wrote a letter](#) to the administration calling for DHS and DOJ to deepen investigations into Texas Gov. Abbott's actions along the southern border and to hold him accountable for the harms of "Operation Lone Star."
- Janet Murguía [joined ABC News Live](#) in October to make the case for a secure and well-managed border, not a wall, and to call for bipartisan, humane policy solutions to update and modernize our immigration system.